

Traditions at Risk: Final Report



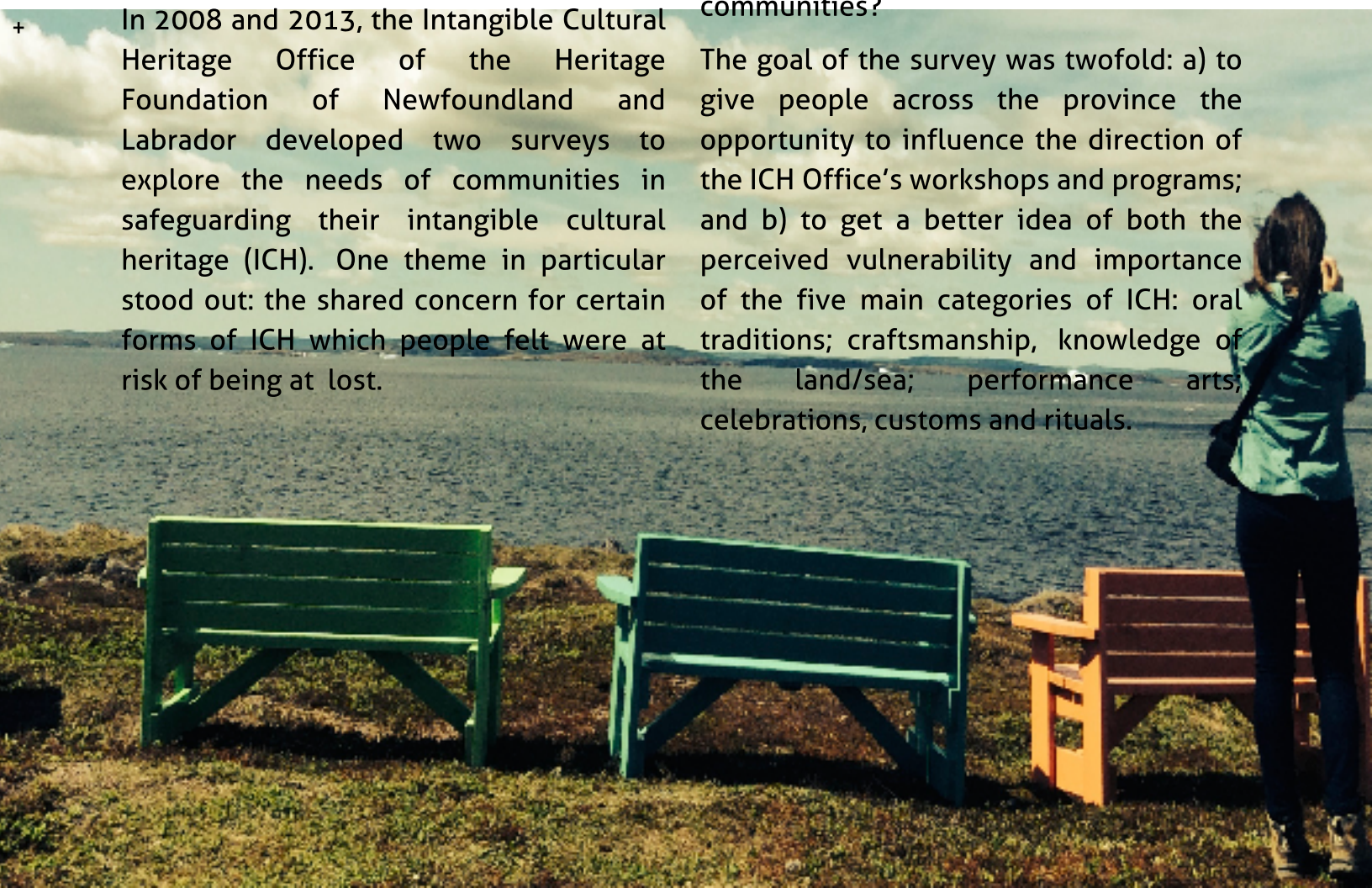
INTRODUCTION

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH), also known as “living heritage,” is made up of five categories: oral traditions; knowledge of natural space; traditional crafts; customs, rituals and celebrations; and performing arts.

In 2008 and 2013, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador developed two surveys to explore the needs of communities in safeguarding their intangible cultural heritage (ICH). One theme in particular stood out: the shared concern for certain forms of ICH which people felt were at risk of being at lost.

This year, we took the responses from the previous surveys and developed a list of traditions, knowledges and skills people thought were at risk of being lost. We put the question back to communities: what forms of ICH is most at risk in NL communities?

The goal of the survey was twofold: a) to give people across the province the opportunity to influence the direction of the ICH Office’s workshops and programs; and b) to get a better idea of both the perceived vulnerability and importance of the five main categories of ICH: oral traditions; craftsmanship, knowledge of the land/sea; performance arts; celebrations, customs and rituals.



BY THE NUMBERS:

Respondents were asked to score each of the five categories of ICH based on the level of importance to the community by giving each category a number between "1" and "10" where "10" meant "extremely important" and "1" meant "not at all important".

- ▶ There was a very small range of difference among the final scores.
- ▶ The lowest scored category was *traditional crafts*
- ▶ The highest ranking category was *knowledge of land and sea*.

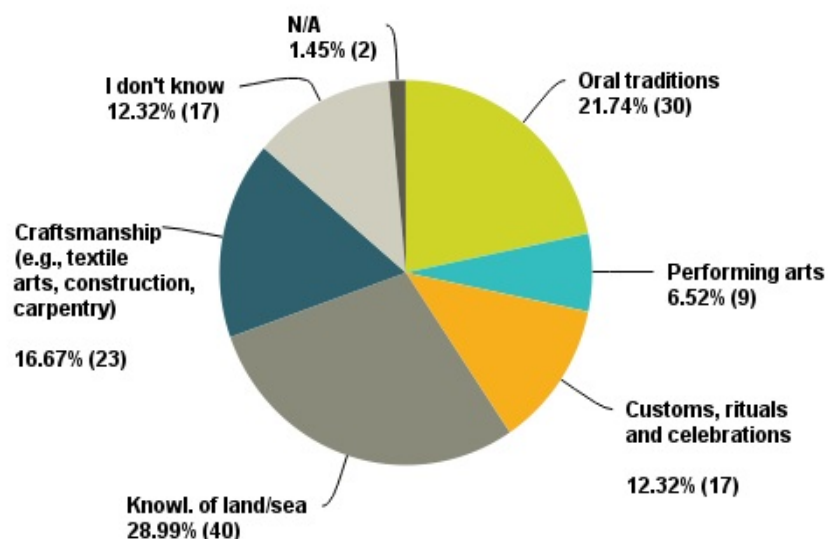
Respondents were then asked to score each of the five categories of ICH according to their level of healthiness in the community by giving each category a number between "1" and "10" where "10" meant "extremely healthy" and "1" meant "very at risk".

- ▶ *Traditional crafts* was said to be the least healthy.
- ▶ *Customs, rituals and celebrations* was rated the healthiest.

The survey then asked respondents directly: which one of the five categories were most at risk of becoming lost:

- ▶ *Knowledge of the land and sea* was said to be the most at risk. "Preserving food" was said to be the most vulnerable form of knowledge relating to land and sea.
- ▶ *Oral traditions* was said to be the most at risk by 22% of respondents. Nearly half also said "storytelling" is at risk.
- ▶ *Traditional crafts* was said to be the most at risk by 17% of respondents. More than half of the people also said traditional construction of rural architecture is at risk.

Thinking about your community, what tradition is most at risk of being lost?



"Very little music (fiddle/guitar/piano) being taught or played publicly - where it can be heard and celebrated by younger people!"

"The local fishery is declining and with it, the knowledge of local fishing grounds."



WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

Knowledge of land and sea was rated as the most important form of intangible cultural heritage and was said to be the most at risk tradition by the majority of respondents. Skills associated with preserving food were of particular concern to respondents.

Oral traditions and customs, rituals and celebrations were said to have the same level of importance among communities. However, *oral traditions* was said to be currently unhealthy and at risk.

Traditional crafts was rated as the least healthy tradition. However, *traditional crafts* was rated as less important than the other four ICH categories.

For a complete list of the traditions at risk discussed in the survey, please see appendix.

"Re-purpose retired clothing. No need to purchase new fabric to turn a coat so that the underside of fabric is used to refashion a newer garment!"

"If I could just identify one intangible tradition that needs focused attention today, it would be the Labrador Inuktitut dialects."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This summary report was written by Meghan Mills. For more information, please contact the Intangible Cultural Heritage Office [ich@heritagefoundation.ca].

Thank-you to everyone who completed a survey. A very big thank-you to those who connected with us through e-mail, phone or one of the Conversation Cafes.

*Photo credit: Dale Jarvis, ICH Officer

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APPENDIX A



Traditional Crafts

Textile Arts

- ▶ Knitting
- ▶ Spinning yarn
- ▶ Quilting (functional, not showpiece)
- ▶ Rug hooking
- ▶ Darning
- ▶ Spruce root baskets

Construction/Trade Skills

- ▶ Woodworking (e.g., fences)
- ▶ Killick
- ▶ Birch brooms
- ▶ Outdoor things: canoes, nets, snowshoes, etc.
- ▶ Net knitting

Oral Traditions

Storytelling

- Genealogy
- Court house
- Settlement
- Northeastern coast shipwrecks
- WWII history (specifically, experiences working on American base in

Argentina).

- Labrador fisheries
- Recitations
- Riddles

Language

- Inuktitut dialects.

Knowledge of Land/Sea

- ▶ Food security and subsistence living (e.g., vegetable gardens, animal husbandry)
- Root cellars, storage.
- Baking (bread with molasses) Local place names
- Traditional travel routes and landmarks
- Wayfinding on the sea (how the tide, current, temperature, presence of bait fish, predators effect fishing grounds).
- Rowing, sculling, navigating using landmarks, dead reckoning, weather reading).

- Small boat handling
- Fish processing (Drying and salting)

Performing Arts

Music

- ▶ Songs
- ▶ Instrumental music
- ▶ Brass band music notation (Teak Day, Old Christmas tradition)
- ▶ Button accordion
- ▶ Aboriginal/Inuit music

Dance

- ▶ Set dancing (e.g., lancers, square dance, reels)
- ▶ Step dance
- ▶ Traditional jigs
- ▶ Running the Goat

Rituals, customs and celebrations

- ▶ Mummering
- ▶ Visiting
- ▶ May Bush
- ▶ St. Bride's Day (Avalon)
- ▶ Garden parties
- ▶ Community Day